

CES Environmental Services, Inc.

EPA coordinates with TCEQ to clean up Houston-area waste site

By Gary Moore, On-Scene Coordinator

CES Environmental Services, Inc. Site (Site) is a former chemical recycling/waste management facility located approximately seven miles from downtown Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site is located in an environmental justice area consisting primarily of residential, educational and commercial establishments. The site was abandoned in 2010 due to Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The site is currently and continues to be managed by the bankruptcy court through a court appointed trustee. The trustee actions are primarily intended reimburse the creditors through the assets of the CES Bankruptcy Estate. As money was available, the trustee conducted some environmental cleanup in order to make assets available for sale for the benefit of the creditors. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) monitored these actions.

In early 2014, the abandoned chemical facility experienced two spills associated with vandalism. The TCEQ requested EPA assistance to address the chemical facility as the Bankruptcy Trustee did not have the sufficient resources to properly secure, clean up, and dispose of the leaking and deteriorating chemical containers. EPA initiated a removal assessment and subsequently mobilized assets in September 2014 to initiate necessary clean up actions. The EPA clean up action lasted until June 10, 2015. During the course of the response, the EPA coordinated with residents by public meetings, fact sheets, site updates, media interviews, and personal interactions with the local community, local colleges, local and federal politicians, non-governmental organizations including the Texas Organizing Project, Texas Low Income Housing Information Service, and Air Alliance Houston.

During the course of the cleanup actions, EPA removed waste from 11 vacuum boxes, 1 roll-off box, 43 ASTs, 167 drums, totes, and miscellaneous containers, 9 frac tanks, 1 subsurface oil/water separator, 19 sumps, 2 trench drain areas, contaminated soils, spill areas, and contaminated pooled water areas. The disposed material included primarily cresol contaminated waste, benzene contaminated waste, and corrosive wastes (some of which were hazardous wastes). The volume of these combined wastes disposed of by EPA was approximately: 541,719 gallons, 206,705 pounds, and 400 cubic yards.

The TCEQ and EPA have identified PRPs. The PRPs have formed the CES Griggs Road PRP Group and is currently investigating and will be addressing the remaining environmental issues related to the site through the TCEQ Voluntary Cleanup Program. The areas of

investigation will include the assessment and cleanup of any remaining on and off-site contamination, as necessary, decontaminating on-site equipment, managing storm water, and managing access control.